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A BRIEF  
DISCOURSE  
OF A  
PASSAGE  
BY THE  
North-POLE  
TO  
JAPAN, CHINA, &c.



Pleaded by Three Experiments : And Answers to  
all Objections that can be urged against a Passage that way.

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1. By a Navigation from *Amsterdam* into the *North-Pole* , and two Degrees beyond it.
  2. By a Navigation from *Japan* towards the *North-Pole*.
  3. By an Experiment made by the *Czar of Muscovy*, whereby it appears, that to the Northwards of *Nova Zembla* is a free and open Sea as far as *Japan, China, &c.*

With a MAP of all the Discovered Lands neereft to the Pole.

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By *Joseph Moxon*, Hydrographer to the King's most Excellent Majesty.

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L O N D O N,

Printed for *Joseph Moxon* , and sold at his Shop at the Sign  
of *Atlas* on *Ludgate-Hill*. 1674.

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With a view to the above objects, the following

17-7-1914. The above is the original of the letter from the  
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L O M D O N

## A Brief Discourse of a Passage by the North-Pole to Japan, China, &c.

**A**Mong the many Effaies that have been made to find a neer Passage to *Japan, China, &c.* the most probable and likely hath as yet (in my opinion) been over-seen, or at least not attempted. And therefore I shall hereby communicate my Conceptions to Publick approbation or censure. It is that a Passage may very probably be about the *North-Pole*. And the Reason inducing me to conceive so, is, That we have no certainty from all the Discoveries that have been made of any Land lying within 8 degrees about the *Pole*: But on the contrary, that I have credibly been informed by a Steer-man of a *Dutch Greenland Ship*, that there is a free and open Sea under the very *Pole*, and somewhat beyond it. And I for my own part give credit to his Relation, and do conceive that any sober ingenious Man would do the like, did he know in what an honest manner, and by what an un-interested accident I happed to hear it; For thus it was: Being about 23 years ago in *Amsterdam*, I went into a Drinking-house to drink a cup of Beer for my thirst, and sitting by the publick Fire, among several People there hapned a Seaman to come in, who seeing a Friend of his there, who he knew went in the *Greenland Voyage*, wondred to see him, because it was not yet time for the *Greenland Fleet* to come home, and ask'd him what accident brought him home so soon: His Friend (who was the Steer-man aforesaid in a *Greenland Ship* that Summer) told him that their Ship went not out to Fish that Summer, but only to take in the Lading of the whole Fleet, to bring it to an early Market, &c. But, said he, before the Fleet had caught Fish e-

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nough to lade us, we, by order of the *Greenland* Company, Sailed into the *North-Pole*, and came back again. Whereupon (his Relation being *Novel* to me) I entred discourse with him, and seem'd to question the truth of what he said. But he did ensure me it was true, and that the Ship was then in *Amsterdam*, and many of the Seamen belonging to her to justify the truth of it: And told me moreover, that they sailed 2 degrees beyond the *Pole*. I askt him, if they found no Land or Islands about the *Pole*? He told me No, there was a free and open Sea; I askt him if they did not meet with a great deal of Ice? He told me No, they saw no Ice. I askt him what Weather they had there? He told me fine warm Weather, such as was at *Amsterdam* in the Summer time, and as hot. I should have askt him more questions, but that he was engaged in discourse with his Friend, and I could not in modesty interrupt them longer. But I believe the Steer-man spoke matter of fact and truth, for he seem'd a plain honest and unaffectitious Person, and one who could have no design upon me.

But though I believe this story, yet methinks I hear many object against it, and are apt to urge three seeming Reasons to prove it false, or at least some particulars of his Relation. And first, That it cannot be warm under the *Pole*, because that about *Greenland*, and many other Parts less Northerly, the Sea is so full of great Bodies of Ice, that Ships can hardly sail for it. Secondly, Or if warm, yet not so warm as at *Amsterdam* in the Summer time, because the farther Northerly the colder Weather. Thirdly, Or if they were under the *Pole*, that they could not tell how to come back, but that they might as well go farther from, as return nearer to home, because the *Needle* pointing always North, they must needs lose themselves in the *North-Pole*, where it must indifferently respect all points of the Horizon alike.

One Answer may serve to the first and second Objection;  
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That it cannot be warm under the *North-Pole*, &c. If we consult the Experience of Travellers and Navigators, we are told that between the *Tropicks*, nay under the *Equinoctial* is generally as moderate Weather as here in *England* in Summer time. Why may it not then be as warm under the *Pole*, as here or at *Amsterdam* in the Summer time? The small height the Sun hath there can be no exception, for then we having the Sun in its Summer Solstice in lesser Altitude than between the *Tropicks*, it must needs be much colder here, which is contradicted. But one Reason why it is as warm here as between the *Tropicks*, is, because between the *Tropicks* the Sun remains scarce above 12 hours of 24 above the Horizon to warm it, when as here it remains almost 17 hours of 24 above the Horizon, and therefore leaves a greater impresson of heat upon it: And the farther Northward we go the longer it remains above the Horizon, and less under the Horizon every 24 hours, till we come within the *Arctick Circle*, where the Sun remains for half a year together, viz. all the Summer above the Horizon, and never sets: And therefore though his beams are not so perpendicular yet they must needs cause a great degree of heat upon the Horizon.

And if it be argued that it is so cold about *Greenland*, &c. and the Seas so full of Ice that Ships can hardly sail for it, yet cannot that Argument prove that it is so about the *Pole*: Because the Ice is made about shoars of Land, but never in open Sea, and comes there only by strength of Currents, or high Winds, which does indeed carry it some small distance from the shoar. But as this Relator said there is under the *Pole* a free and open Sea, &c. and consequently void of Ice, in Summer time at least. Besides, experience tells us, that all Land-breezes are colder than those that come from Sea, and therefore it may be cold about *Greenland*, because of the Land, and yet warm under the *Pole*, where the Sea is open, &c.

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The third Objection is, that if they were under the *Pole*, they could not tell how to come back, because of the indifference the *Needle* should bear to every point of the *Horizon*.

I examined not my Relator upon this Argument, though when I was parted from him I was sorry I did not. But it is easie to apprehend how to guide a Ship either forward or backward by an Observation of the Sun a little before you enter the *Pole*: for by finding in or near what Meridian it is, or upon what part of the Ship it bears, whether on Head or Stern, on Starboard or Larboard, you may measure Time near enough with a Glasse, to know several daies after in or near what Meridian the Sun is at any known or estimate time, and consequently know how to proceed forwards, or come back with your Ship. Or if the *Moon* have North Latitude you may do the same by the Moon. But if the *Pole* were Traded, in short time it might be found by Variation of the *Needle*, for there is doubtless Variation in it, and in all the Meridians about it several Variations.

Thus far it appears there is a free and open Sea in Summer time (at least) about the *North-Pole*. But I shall add another Relation of one *James Ben*, whose Father lived about five years ago in Crown-Court in *Russel-street* in *Covent Garden*, and himself lives now in *Wapping*. This Mr. Ben sailed to *Japan* with the *Dutch* as a Carpenter of the Ship, and he told me that that Year, viz. 1668. he was newly come home from *Japan*: I askt him how long they were under way home from thence? He told me he could not well tell, because when they set out from *Japan* the Captain commanded the Steer-man to sail due North, and they did sail from thence about 400 *Dutch* Miles, which is almost 27 degrees due North. I askt him whether they met with no Land or Islands? as I had done before the *Dutch Greenland* Steer-man: He told me No, they



they saw no Land, but that there was a free and open Sea so far as they Sailed, nor any sign of Land appeared. I askt him why they sailed so far Northward? He told me he could not tell, only the Captain commanded it, &c. But I suppose the *East India Company* commanded the Captain either to make a Discovery of Land to encrease Trade, or to satisfy themselves with the knowledge of an open Sea, that when they saw Reason they might expedite their Voyages between *Holland* and those parts that way. I was thus Inquisitive with him, because ever since I heard the former Relation of the *Greenland Steer-man*, I harped at a Passage through or about the *North Pole* to *Japan*, *China*, &c. and by these two Discoveries it appears very probable that there is so, and that it is passable in Summer time.

I come to a third Relation, not only of the probability, but of the certainty of a Passage found by the *Russians* this last year, as it came to the hands of the Secretary of the *Royal Society* from *Amsterdam*, by a Correspondent of his; which in *Transact.* Numb. 101. run in these words:

*A Letter, and Map, not long since sent to the Publisher, by an Experienced Person residing at Amsterdam, containing a true Description of Nova Zembla, together with an intimation of the advantage of its shape and position.*

S I R,

I Herewith send you what I have received out of *Muscovy*, which is a New Mapp of *Nova Zembla* and *Weigats*, as it hath been discover'd by the express order of the *Czar*; and drawn by a Painter, called *Panelapoetski*, who sent it me from *Mosco* for a Present: by which it appears, That *Nova Zembla* is not an Island, as hitherto it hath been believed to be; and that the *Mare glaciale* is not a Sea, but a *Sinus* or Bay, the waters whereof are sweet, which

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is the same with what the *Tartars* do also assure us, who have tasted those waters in the very midst of the *Sinus*. The *Samajeds* as well as the *Tartars* do unanimously affirm, that passing on the back of *Nova Zembla*, at a considerable distance from the shore, Navigators may well pass as far as *Japan*. And 'tis a great fault in the *English* and *Dutch*, that seeking to get to *Japan* on the South side of *Nova Zembla*, they have almost always passed the *Weigats*. The letter O in the great River *Oby* marks the place of a Cataract or Fall of waters. The letter K denotes the conjunction of *Zembla* with the Continent. The River marked L, runs toward *China*, called *Kitaie*: which is not every where navigable, by reason of the rocks and other inconveniencies that obstruct the passing of Vessels. *Weigats* it self is very difficult to pass, because of the great quantity of Ice, continually falling into it out of the River *Oby*, whereby that strait passage is stopp'd up. The *Samajeds* go every year a fishing upon the said sweet Sea and that on *Nova Zembla's* side. This Map of *Nova Zembla* is here omitted, because here is set forth a Map of all the Lands nearest about the North-Pole.

FINIS.